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To: EISR, Bonnie Fogdall/YM/RWDOE
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Subject: SDEIS Comment

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July 5, 2001

Yucca Mountain Supplement to the Draft EIS

1...

I am submitting comments on the proposed geologic repository for spent fuel at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. [The transport of these wastes across the country is not addressed in the supplement to the Draft EIS, but it is an issue that matters to those of us living along the shipping routes. Accidents are addressed in the document, but discussion is limited to the repository site and its surroundings, areas off limits to

1

1 cont.

Transportation accidents could put thousands of people at risk and they are inevitable. There have already been accidents on the railways and roadways in the St. Louis area that demonstrate this inevitability and the folly of sending dangerous materials through densely populated areas where the lives and property of many residents could be affected. A recent derailment of fourteen coal cars (May 31st) here resulted in coal being dumped across the street from the homes of residents in Webster Groves. What if the cargo had been storage containers full of spent fuel assemblies and even one container had ruptured or caught on fire? In January, 1979, emergency response to a spill of uranium ?yellow cake? on Interstate 70, near the St. Louis airport, turned out to be a comedy of errors. There were no injuries, but the accident pointed to problems with communication and with emergency responders that could have had serious consequences.

2

The lead story on the front page of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch on July 1st has a clear and disturbing connection with the shipments of radioactive wastes to Yucca Mountain. The story reported on a trend to reduce trauma services at the nation's hospitals due to lack of funding. Five area hospitals in our metropolitan area are designated Level 1 trauma centers, those with the most comprehensive emergency services. Three of these have the ability to handle victims of exposure to radioactivity and other hazardous materials. Though they have isolated entrances, special shower rooms, drains, holding tanks and a decontamination room, each center has only one or two beds. In the event of a serious accident involving exposure to radiation, the best equipped hospitals here could only treat five or six seriously injured patients. That number would be reduced if trauma services are reduced.

3

Proponents of the Yucca Mountain facility argue that the risk of accidents is extremely small. The risk may be small, but a single accident could have catastrophic effects. Spent fuel assemblies contain isotopes that will remain radioactive for many thousands of years. Radioactive dusts and gases released as the result of an accident could contaminate large areas of land and bodies of water. The closest proximity of these dangerous materials to the general public will be along transportation corridors.

4

At the repository, the proposed ?lower-temperature operating mode? creates an easier pathway for terrorists while the radioactive wastes ?cool? for varying lengths of time. Perhaps this is an effort to prevent criticality accidents.

5

Why not leave high-level wastes where they are now generated and stored? The risks to land and people, both to workers and the general public, are too great if we ship these materials across the country, store them for decades above ground and ?emplace? them forever in a repository known to have thirty-three earthquake faults. It makes no sense.